

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 17/034/2001

Extra 71/01 Death penalty / Fear of imminent execution

18 October 2001

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC *Abdulmejid (m),*
OF CHINA (PRC) *Abdulahmad (m),*
Three others, names not known

Five ethnic Uighurs were sentenced to death on 15 October in the city of Gulja, known in Chinese as Yining, in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), in the northwest of China.

The five men, including two people named as Abdulmejid and Abdulahmad, were reportedly sentenced to death for the alleged crimes of "anti-state separatism" at a public trial in Gulja city. According to unofficial sources, Abdulmejid was involved in ethnic unrest which took place in Gulja in February 1997. At the same trial, another seven men reportedly received varying terms of imprisonment.

It is not clear if the five defendants have appealed against their sentence or if the Supreme People's Court has handed down final approval of the sentences.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

China maintains the death penalty for a large number of offences, including non-violent crimes and economic crimes such as tax, financial fraud and counterfeiting. Execution is by shooting or lethal injection. The death penalty is used extensively, arbitrarily, and frequently as a result of political interference. It is particularly used during periodic "Strike Hard" anti-crime campaigns, when defendants may be sentenced to death for crimes which at other times are punishable by imprisonment.

The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is the only region in China where Amnesty International has recorded executions and the sentencing to death of people for political crimes.

China has used the recent events on September 11 in America and the subsequent attacks on Afghanistan, as a pretext to call for more international support to eradicate what it claims to be "Muslim terrorists" in the XUAR. Amnesty International is concerned that this may lead to an increase in the repression of Muslim ethnic groups and a deterioration of the dismal human rights situation in the region as the Chinese authorities do not distinguish between 'terrorism' and 'separatism'. Separatism in fact covers a broad range of activities most of which amount to no more than peaceful opposition or dissent. Preaching or teaching Islam outside government controls is also considered subversive.

Amnesty International has recorded at least 2,960 death sentences and 1,781 executions in China in the 3 months from April to June 2001. These figures, taken from a limited number of sources, show that more people were executed in China between April and June than in the rest of the world for the last three years.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible in English, Chinese or your own language:

- urging the Chinese authorities to commute the death sentences passed on *Abdulmejid, Abdulahmad and the three other unnamed defendants in Gulja city*;
- *expressing deep concern at the arbitrary and massive use of the death penalty in China and its increased use for economic and non-violent crimes, and calling on the government to immediately commute any death sentences handed down as part of the "Strike Hard" anti-crime crackdown*;
- acknowledging the duty of the Chinese authorities to take appropriate measures to ensure the security of their citizens, but expressing concern that the Chinese authorities are trying to use the events on September 11 to justify extremely harsh repression of Muslim ethnic groups in XUAR;
- acknowledging the right of governments to bring perpetrators of crime to justice, but expressing opposition to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment and as a violation of the right to life, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- noting that the death penalty has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect on crime and is brutalizing to all involved in its application.

APPEALS TO:

Premier of the People's Republic of China

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Guowuyuan

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People's Republic of China

Telex: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN

Telegram: Premier Zhu Rongji, Beijing, China

Faxes: c/0 Ministry of Communications - Fax: 00 86 10 6529 2345

Salutation: Your Excellency

President of the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China

XIAO Yang Yuanzhang

Zuigao Renmin Fayuan

27 Dongjiao Min Xiang

Beijingshi 100726

People's Republic of China

Telegram: President, Supreme People's Court, Beijing, China

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Salutation: Dear President

Chairman of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regional People's Government

ABDULAHAT Abdurixit Zhuxi

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People's Republic of China

Telegram: Chairman of the Regional People's Government, Wulumuqi, Xinjiang

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Salutation: Dear Chairman

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